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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1326
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SUBJECT: SURVEY FINDS PRESIDENT OBAMA IS MOST
POPULAR POLITICIAN IN KINSHASA

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: A recent public-opinion survey found President Barack Obama is the most popular political figure in Kinshasa, but obtained just two votes more than his nearest rival, President Joseph Kabila. Other findings in the survey attest to the pervasive impact of television, especially among young and female audiences. Radio listenership in Kinshasa experienced a loss in audience share, particularly among women who stay at home. Newspapers also showed a loss in daily readership, and overall they reach only a small percentage of the population, being particularly weak among youth and women. End summary.

Obama most popular politician

¶2. (SBU) President Barack Obama is the most popular political figure in Kinshasa, according to Les Experts, one of the more reputable public opinion and survey research organizations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Obama beat out President Joseph Kabila by two votes in a sample of 1,000 residents of 22 different neighborhoods in Kinshasa. Microsoft founder Bill Gates was identified as the third-most popular business figure, behind diamond dealer and music entrepreneur Didi Kanuani and Governor of Katanga Province Moise Katumbi.

Television the dominant media

¶2. (SBU) Television is watched by 100 percent of the sample, with 79 percent of youth and students (aged 12 and 24) watching television every evening between 6:00 and 9:00 pm local time. The five most popular television channels are, in order: Mirador, Antenne A, RTNC1, RTGA, and Congo Web TV. The most popular programs are local soap operas, news, Nigerian films, music, and sports.

Radio has less impact than in Kinshasa

¶3. (SBU) Kinshasa residents listen to radio much less than their compatriots in provincial cities and rural areas, where television broadcast signals can be weak or non-existent. Radio listenership in Kinshasa registered an 8 percent decline of audience from a previous Les Experts survey. Daily radio listenership decreased by 20 percent among women who stay at home. 23 percent of those interviewed listen to the radio every day. The majority of daily radio listeners are white collar managers/professionals who tune in between 6:00 and 9:00 pm. The most popular radio stations are Mirador FM, Radio Okapi, RTGA, JD FM and RSM. While popular music dominates the programming at Mirador, RTGA and JDFM, Okapi is popular for news broadcasts and RSM for its sermons, religious music

and prayers. Both Radio Okapi and Radio France International (broadcast from Brazzaville) scored much higher than government radio RTNC for news listeners.

Newspapers read by few

14. (SBU) Newspaper reading continues to decline, with only 3 percent of those interviewed reading a newspaper every day, and 20 percent at least once a month. 13 percent of white collar managers/professionals report reading one of the ten daily newspapers, while youth, students, and women who stay at home report negligible readership rates (1 to 2 percent). The pro-government "Le Palmes" remains the most popular newspaper, read by 41 percent of those interviewed, while "Le Potentiel" came in second at 28 percent. "Depeches de Brazzaville," a newspaper from the neighboring Republic of Congo (just across the Congo river from Kinshasa), is read by 12 percent of the sample, probably due at least in part to a cover price that is one tenth of the Kinshasa papers (200 Congolese francs vs. 2,000).

19. (SBU) Comment: President Obama's popularity is very strong in the DRC, as this survey indicates. Yet it is difficult to evaluate how that personal popularity translates into support for U.S. policies and values. It would be helpful to have measureable baselines for Congolese opinions and attitudes on U.S. politics and culture in order to measure effects of Embassy programs and focus communications efforts more strategically. On a related point, the results of this survey show the power of television in Kinshasa. Since newspapers hold the attention of only an elite audience in the capital, Embassy's press and outreach activities should target television audiences in Kinshasa and radio listeners in other areas to enable us to communicate effectively with the masses. End comment.

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